



STREET ART: Salvador Barajas scans mural he and other Chicano artists painted on concrete walls beneath Coronado Bridge, on Logan Avenue near Dewey Street. Much of the work is portraits.



Chicano Artists Go To The Walls

By LEE GRANT
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The names are Mexican:

Guillermo Aranda, Victor Ochoa, Salvadore Torres, Coyote Tonacatecutli, Mario Acevedo, Armando Nunez, Abran Quevedo and Salvatore Barajas.

They are artists and their art is Mexican, too.

They paint on concrete, the freeway structures which cut through their community and encircle Chicano Park, near Logan Avenue and Dewey Street.

Senor Barajas stands before his

work, paint brush and make-shift palette in hand. On his head is a green fatigue hat, a button attached to it. The button reads: Chicano Artists.

The work began a month ago and may not be completed for years. The city, you see, has granted the artists permission to paint the concrete walls and pillars from Southeast San Diego to the Coronado Bay.

"This work depicts our thinking and our background," said Barajas. "It reflects people's ideas and their life."

It reflects the "barrio" (the community), "raza" (the Mexican people) and "lucha" (the struggle).

The artists number about 12, most of whom have grown to manhood in Southeast San Diego. They speak Spanish, mostly. They are "carneles" (brothers).

All have professional ambitions. Barajas, for instance, is a commercial artist.

The process of concrete painting is a long, difficult and expensive one.

First the walls are washed, then treated with an acid and primer. When it dries, sketches are made in charcoal and filled with acrylic paints.

The artists come from two loose-knit groups — Centro Cultural de la Raza

headquartered in the old Ford Building at Balboa Park, and Barrio Artists.

One mural, on the south side of Logan Avenue, visible from the Interstate 5 South freeway, is, said Barajas, "a reflection of the Chicano movement, the farmworkers struggle, fighting for justice."

Much of it is portraits—Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Chavez Ortiz, Miguel Hidalgo, Pancho Villa, Zapata, Diego Rivera and Ruben Salazar.

There are skeletons, "the skeletons of the Aztecs when they were murdered by the Spaniards," said Barajas, and a

deer sketch, the sacred animal.

There is also one of an attractive woman wearing black shorts and a white peasant blouse, dark hair over her shoulder.

"That," said Barajas, "is a Mexican waitress."

Across the street, the mural is nearly complete. It is partly an image of the community. In it is the Coronado Bridge, the Hidalgo Center, "the barrio," said Barajas.

There is an Aztec weather symbol which resembles a swastika, the black

eagle of the United Farm Workers Union, a rose, a leopard, a Mexican man in chains.

The colors are purples, reds, white. "The interpretation," said Barajas, "is your own."

Around the corner, under the bridge is a sunburst, the lettered word "ATLAN," a butterfly.

"We are artists working together," said Barajas, "and when people drive by and look down on this we want them to realize there's beauty in the world."